

bottom 50 percent of the income distribution. Many people stay too long in low-income unemployment situations, and it is not healthy. And too often, the fathers are not in those households. If you are in the bottom 50 percent of the income distribution and give birth, there is a greater than 50-percent chance that the father will not be living with you when the child comes home from the hospital. Perhaps, as many suggest, our welfare policies are exacerbating these trends. We need to look at that.

Also worrying is the decline of charitable giving since 2007. Like the overall economy, this vital part of our social and economic system has not recovered effectively. Total charitable giving fell in 2008 to \$303 billion from \$326 billion. As of the end of 2012, total giving was only \$316 billion—still 3 percent below what it was 6 years ago.

I would conclude and note that the road we are on is leading to the continued erosion of the middle-class civil society, the quality of life for hard-working Americans is not improving financially, and the continued expansion of the welfare state and the permanent entrenchment of a political class that profits from the growth of government. It is time we recognize both the disastrous conditions facing working Americans and the moral obligation we have to replace dependency on government with the freedom and dignity that comes from work and independence. That has got to be our goal.

There are things that can be done to improve these conditions. It is time for us to defend working Americans and their undeniably legitimate concerns about current trends. I will talk about that as we go forward. It is something we need to seriously consider.

Relevant here is this question, can we bring into our country more people than we have jobs for? Won't that pull down wages and make it harder for people to get work? And this question, shouldn't we defend more effectively our workers against unfair trade and competition from around the world? Both of those policies are ones I hope we could have bipartisan support on, although I am worried. The Senate's immigration bill would increase permanent immigration by 50 percent, would increase guest workers—people who come and take jobs—by double, all in addition to the 11 million who would be given legal status here.

I do think our colleagues are correct to say we should do more about trade and have fair competition on the world stage for our workers. I think we have got to convert more of this welfare spending, the 80-some-odd programs that are fundamentally geared to lower income Americans, that spend \$750 billion a year—which is larger than Social Security, larger than defense, and larger than Medicare—we need to convert some of that to better use.

For example, for every \$100 spent on these programs, only \$1 goes to job training. Shouldn't we focus more on

getting our unemployed, our people who need more training, trained, ready to move into the workforce, to take jobs? Can we afford to bring in millions of people to take jobs and to leave our people on welfare and the unemployment rolls?

Those are some of the fundamental questions we as Americans need to be asking. But first and foremost, colleagues, we are not able to deny the unassailable fact that we have had a slide in the financial well-being of millions of Americans, and that this has been going on for well over a decade.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that we be in a period of morning business until 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

CYBER BULLYING

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about an issue we don't talk about here, and I am joined by my colleague, the senior Senator from Florida, Senator NELSON.

We appear on the floor today to talk about an issue which I would argue is a clear and present danger to young Americans. What is that? We could probably make a long list of things we are concerned about as it relates to young people, but we are here today to talk about bullying and harassment.

According to the Department of Education, nearly one in three students ages 12 to 18 is affected by bullying and harassment. Another study estimates that 60,000 students in the United States of America do not attend school each day because they fear being bullied.

With the advent of text messaging and social media, many children find they cannot escape the harassment when they go home at night. It follows them from the moment they wake until the moment they go to sleep. This problem was brought once again into the national consciousness in the last couple of days.

I am reading a headline from the Tampa Bay Times, dated September 12, 2013: "Lakeland Girl Commits Suicide After Being Bullied Online."

Senator NELSON will be talking about that, as will I.

Here is the other headline from the Washington Post about the same incident: "Police: Florida Girl Who Committed Suicide Had Been Bullied for Months by as Many as 15 Girls."

I am the father of four daughters and I remember times when my daughters were going through high school. We have one in high school, one in college,

and two out of college. I remember when our daughter was going through high school and instant messaging was one way to communicate, kind of a back and forth between some of the girls in her high school class. She was about 15 or 16 at the time. It never rose to the level of any kind of serious harassment. It was something that a lot of families I am sure have experienced. But my wife and I were blessed that our daughters never were exposed to what this young girl was exposed to. I won't show her picture, but I am looking at a picture of her right now. Her name is Rebecca Ann Sedwick, 12 years old, of Lakewood, FL, a beautiful girl subjected to the most horrific kind of harassment and abuse. It is almost unimaginable that a group of human beings could do this to another person. Unfortunately, it happens all too often.

Because my colleague from Florida knows the case and the news articles better than I, I ask him to highlight this. But I think we all have the same reaction, one of horror, and we are summoned by our conscience to do something about this. We can't just say, as some say, Well, every generation has faced some kind of harassment, some kind of bullying, so it is part of growing up. I have heard this argument. The argument is without validity, because no generation prior to this generation has had the technological burden. When I was growing up and someone was bullied at school, that was bad enough, but it ended when the schoolday ended. But today that is not possible if you have determined and vicious people who want to bully another student, because technology allows that person to be bullied when they leave school, all throughout the night, and then throughout the next day and day after day.

I turn with respect to my colleague to talk a little bit more about this particular case.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, many States such as mine, Florida, have strict bullying policies in place. But we need to go beyond that, and Federal legislation is needed because, as the Secretary of Education has said, these laws in the States "lack consistency and enforcement mechanisms" across the country.

So you get to the tragic case in Florida of Rebecca Ann Sedwick. It is a tragic reminder that bullying in the social media is increasing in both method and mercilessness.

Here is a girl with a single mom. She gets subjected to this bullying in class, so her mom takes her out of the school and puts her into another school. This is a 12-year-old little girl. She then is bullied online.

This occurs for 2 years. This is what she gets: Why are you alive? You should die. You are ugly. Can you die, please? She gets a constant dose of this not only at school, but then in the social media. Her mom tried to take

away the cell phone that would have these applications. But when she gets her phone back, she gets a new application, and this cyber bullying keeps coming through.

We have before us legislation that would get educators and parents more involved in trying to prevent this kind of bullying. Unfortunately, Congress is crippled by gridlock and for the last 6 years has been unable to pass any major education bill that contains this anti-cyber-bullying language. That is why I suggest my colleagues consider this provision on its own—separate from the broader bill—to expedite our response to what has become an increasing problem. The measure would require elementary and secondary schools to better address bullying and harassment. This calls on schools to report incidents of bullying to parents and others so we can try to prevent such conduct in the future.

I have asked the leadership, the leadership of the committee, as has my colleague, that they consider expediting this passage because of the national attention to this tragic incident in Florida. I can tell you, it is all over Florida.

I want to thank Senator CASEY for his sponsorship and continuing leadership on this issue over the last two Congresses, along with Senator KIRK. He and Senator KIRK have introduced the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which is included in the broader reauthorization of No Child Left Behind legislation—if we could then focus on this specific issue, if the broader bill is not going to pass, and get this out in the midst of this enormous personal tragedy.

I cannot understand. For 2 years this has happened to a young child. Her mom is doing everything possible, even pulling her out of one school and putting her in another. Yet it continues and it drives this young lady to go into an abandoned cement plant and take her life because she doesn't think her life is worth living as a result of all of these taunts.

I thank Senator CASEY for his leadership. Let's see if we can move it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I commend Senator NELSON for his leadership and for bringing this horrific example to the attention of the Senate, at least on the floor, even though many had seen the news coverage. I thank him for his leadership in trying to focus on this, even if a larger education bill does not pass.

I will conclude by saying anyone who doubts this is a problem should read one or more of these articles about this case, but I am sure we could cite many others. I will make part of the RECORD both of these articles I referred to, the Tampa Bay Times of September 12 article and the Washington Post story of the next day, September 13, that I referred to.

I want to read two lines from both stories. From the Tampa Bay story, the sheriff of Polk County, FL, Sheriff Brady Judd, says about Rebecca Ann Sedwick, she was “absolutely terrorized on social media.” That is the sheriff, a law enforcement official who made a determination about what happened to this girl.

Then in the Washington Post story—this is actually the Washington Post but it is the Associated Press; I should correct that—but right in the middle of the story by the Associated Press:

The case has illustrated once more the way that youngsters are using the Internet to torment others.

In one they refer to being “terrorized,” in the other they refer to someone being “tormented.”

This is a big problem. The legislation I have introduced may not have prevented this, but for sure we need legislation where schools at a minimum are required to have a code of conduct which includes bullying and harassment.

By the way, they do not need to wait for a bill to be passed. There is no excuse for a school in the United States of America not to have a code of conduct that specifically prohibits bullying right now. Any school district that does not have that in place should be ashamed of themselves and they should get to work and get that done. They don't need to wait for a bill from Washington.

That is No. 1, prohibit the conduct very specifically. No. 2, the States need to collect information and make that information available and report this information to the Department of Education. But one of the most important features of this, to get it right, is you have to specifically prohibit bullying that is done by way of electronic communication.

Whether or not this bill is passed in the near term, there are things schools can do right now. They have no excuse to wait for a bill. That is the school's responsibility, and the community's, and the school district's.

What about other areas of responsibility? Parents have a responsibility. So parents either of the tormenters, the perpetrators of this crime, but even parents who do not have children involved on either end—every parent has a responsibility. I know people do not like to hear that. They do not like public officials telling parents what they should do. Frankly, I am not too concerned about that today. Every parent has a responsibility to tell their children not to engage in this kind of conduct. If they do not do that, they are not doing their job. If their child is involved in this kind of bullying, they need to figure out a way to stop their children from doing that. If they do not do that, they are not doing their job. Parents who hear about another child who is being bullied have a responsibility to tell someone, and the students have a responsibility as well.

We are all responsible here. We cannot say it is just the school district's

problem or just the Federal Government's problem or just the State's problem or just the parents' problem. We are all responsible when this happens and we all have a responsibility to do something about it because this is unacceptable. This is a crime we should never ever tolerate.

Unfortunately, we keep reading the stories, we keep hearing about this, and some people are willing to walk away. We need to do more than just talk about legislation. I have a very good bill. I thank Senator KIRK for making it a bipartisan priority. But we have to do more than just talk about legislation and pass bills. That is important, but we need to take ownership of this issue as parents, as citizens, and as Americans. We all have a responsibility.

May it be said years from now, decades from now, that because of horrific and disturbing stories such as the story from Florida where Rebecca Ann Sedwick was pushed and tormented to the point where, according to the news article, she committed suicide—let it be said of us that we took the right steps to substantially reduce the likelihood that this kind of story ever plays out again.

I ask unanimous consent the articles be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 13, 2013]

POLICE: FLORIDA GIRL WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE HAD BEEN BULLIED FOR MONTHS BY AS MANY AS 15 GIRLS

(By Associated Press)

TAMPA, FL.—For nearly a year, as many as 15 girls ganged up on 12-year-old Rebecca Ann Sedwick and picked on her, authorities say, bombarding her with online messages such as “You should die” and “Why don't you go kill yourself.”

Rebecca couldn't take it anymore.

She changed one of her online screen names to “That Dead Girl.” She messaged a boy in North Carolina: “I'm jumping.” And then, on Monday, the Lakeland girl went to an abandoned concrete plant, climbed a tower and hurled herself to her death.

Authorities have seized computers and cellphones from some of the girls as they decide whether to bring charges in what appeared to be the nation's latest deadly cyberbullying case.

The bullying started over a “boyfriend issue” last year at Crystal Lake Middle School, Sheriff Grady Judd said. But he gave no details. Police said Rebecca was suspended at one point for fighting with a girl who used to be her friend.

Rebecca had been “absolutely terrorized” by the other girls, Judd said. He said detectives found some of her diaries at her home, and she talked of how depressed she was about the situation.

“Her writings would break your heart,” he said.

The case has illustrated, once more, the ways in which youngsters are using the Internet to torment others.

“There is a lot of digital drama. Middle-school kids are horrible to each other, especially girls,” said Perry Aftab, a New Jersey-based lawyer and expert on cyberbullying.

Last December, Rebecca was hospitalized for three days after cutting her wrists because of what she said was bullying, according to the sheriff. Later, after Rebecca complained that she had been pushed in the hallway and that another girl wanted to fight her, Rebecca's mother began home-schooling her in Lakeland, a city of about 100,000 midway between Tampa and Orlando, Judd said.

This fall, Rebecca started at a new school, Lawton Chiles Middle Academy, and loved it, Judd said. But the bullying continued online.

"She put on a perfect, happy face. She never told me," Rebecca's mother, Tricia Norman, told the Lakeland Ledger. "I never had a clue. I mean, she told me last year when she was being bullied, but not this year, and I have no idea why."

After Rebecca's suicide, police looked at her computer and found search queries such as "what is overweight for a 13-year-old girl," "how to get blades out of razors," and "how many over-the-counter drugs do you take to die." One of her screensavers also showed Rebecca with her head resting on a railroad track.

Police said that she had met the North Carolina boy at an airport and that they had remained friends online. The 12-year-old boy didn't tell anyone about the "I'm jumping, I can't take it anymore" message he received from her on Monday morning, shortly before her suicide, authorities said.

Detectives said the other girls' parents have been cooperative.

Florida has a bullying law, but it leaves punishment to schools, not police. Legal experts said it is difficult to bring charges against someone accused of driving a person to suicide.

"We've had so many suicides that are related to digital harassment. But we also have free-speech laws in this country," Aftab said.

In a review of news articles, The Associated Press found about a dozen suicides in the U.S. since October 2010 that were attributed at least in part to cyberbullying. Aftab said she believes the real number is at least twice that.

In 2006, 13-year-old Megan Meier hanged herself in Missouri after she was dumped online by a fictitious teenage boy created in part by an adult neighbor, Lori Drew, authorities said. A jury found Drew guilty of three federal misdemeanors, but a judge threw out the verdicts and acquitted her.

Florida's law, the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act, was named after a teenager who killed himself after being harassed by classmates. The law was amended July 1 to cover cyberbullying.

David Tirella, a Florida attorney who lobbied for the law and has handled dozens of cyberbullying cases, said law enforcement can also seek more traditional charges.

"The truth is, even without these school bullying laws, there's battery, there's stalking," he said.

[From the Tampa Bay Times, Sept. 12, 2013]
LAKELAND GIRL COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER
BEING BULLIED ONLINE
(The Ledger)

LAKELAND.—Investigators have identified at least 15 girls who were involved in the social media circle of a 12-year-old Lakeland girl who took her own life after more than a year of constant bullying.

At a news conference Thursday, Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said it appears Rebecca Ann Sedwick jumped to her death at an old cement business after being beat down with hate messages online. Her body was found Tuesday.

During their investigation, detectives found multiple social media applications

where Sedwick was cyberbullied with messages, including "Go kill yourself," and "Why are you still alive?"

Sedwick was "absolutely terrorized on social media," Judd said.

The Sheriff's Office is investigating the cyberbullying, Judd said.

Judd said parents of all 15 girls have cooperated with detectives and several cellphones and laptops have been confiscated.

Before her death, Sedwick had searched questions online related to suicide, including "How many over-the-counter drugs do you take to die?" and "How many Advil do you have to take to die?"

The night before her death, Sedwick gave several warning signs about her planned suicide that were never reported for help.

Judd said a 12-year-old boy in North Carolina, whom Sedwick met through social media, knew of her plan. Sedwick messaged him only hours before her death saying she was dead and "I'm jumping, I can't take it anymore."

Sedwick also changed her name early Tuesday morning on the free messaging application, Kik Messenger, to "That Dead Girl."

Judd said detectives are trying to investigate the social media applications that Sedwick used, including Kik and Ask.fm, but many of the websites are based in other countries.

Florida has an antibullying law that covers cyberbullying. As the investigation continues, Judd said charges, including cyberstalking, could be filed.

He said it appears that the bullying started sometime in 2012 and was physical at her former school, Crystal Lake Middle School, and then moved completely online.

"We're trying to sort out a bunch of girl talk that goes further than girl talk," he said.

The investigation is still in its early stages, but Judd said there were warning signs that nobody noticed. If detectives can find evidence, the girls could be charged with felony cyberstalking because Sedwick was under 16 years old.

Mr. NELSON. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONFRONTING REALITIES

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, there is a lot of concern all over this country about what is going on in Washington in terms of the possibility that the United States, for the first time in its history, may not pay its debts and what that means to the American economy, what it means to the world economy, and what it means to the international financial system. There is a great deal of concern about the possibility that on October 1, the U.S. Government may shut down because we have some rightwing extremists in the House who want to, among other things, abolish legislation passed 4 years ago—the Affordable Care Act—and throw something else in there.

Before I get to those issues, I wish to speak about the reality of what is going on in the economy today. What I want to do is something that is not done often enough, and that is to ask where some of our rightwing colleagues are really coming from. What are their goals?

Fine, they want to shut down the government on October 1. OK, so they don't want to, for the first time in the history of America, pay our bills. But what else do they want? What is this rightwing ideology which has taken over the House? That is an issue that we do not talk about as much as we should.

I wish to begin my discussion by looking at the reality of what is going on in the American economy and why people are so angry and frustrated that the government is not responding to their needs—and they have every reason to be angry.

The Census Bureau reported the other day a rather extraordinary fact, a very depressing fact; that is, in terms of median family income—what the typical American family right in the middle of our economy is experiencing—that family made less money last year than it did 24 years ago. Twenty-four years have come and gone, people have worked so hard, and after 24 years they are now earning less money as a family than they did back in 1989.

Further, what the Census Bureau told us is the typical middle-class family has seen its income go down by more than \$5,000 since 1999, after adjusting for inflation. So if people are angry in New Mexico and if they are angry in California, that is why. They are working hard and their income is going down.

The average male worker made \$283 less last year than he did 44 years ago. How is that for progress? Less money last year, male worker, than 44 years ago. The average female worker earned \$1,700 less last year than she did in 2007—going down. A record-breaking 46.5 million Americans are now living in poverty. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world, at almost 22 percent. A higher percentage of American kids live in poverty now than was the case in 1965. In other words, we are moving but we are moving in the wrong direction.

Meanwhile, the people on top, the wealthiest people in this country, are doing phenomenally well. That is the major point that has to be made over and over. This is not an earthquake or a tsunami that has hit everybody, we are all in this together and everybody is struggling. Not the case. The wealthiest people are doing phenomenally well.

Last week we learned that 95 percent of the new income generated in this country from 2009 to 2012 went to the top 1 percent. That is a phenomenal statistic. All of the new income generated—95 percent of it—went to the wealthiest 1 percent. Earlier this week